

The Middle East

Steps for Successful Networking

Business Culture – Pre Contact Preparations:

- Friday is Sabbath: Don't expect to do business or attend meetings.
 - ☐ Family day – no phone calls.
- Holy month of Ramadan: Avoid trying to do business in the Middle East during Ramadan
 - ☐ Don't plan to get anything done
- Muslims pray five times a day:
 - ☐ Daily routines, appointments and meetings must be fitted in appropriately around prayer times.
- Beware: Always be prepared to exercise patience - **Patience is a virtue**
 - ☐ Punctuality is not a central characteristic in the Arab world
 - ☐ Being tested / observe your reaction and behavior for being made to wait?
- Business moves slowly in the Arab culture:
 - ☐ Decisions are made slowly
 - ☐ Bureaucratic formalities tend to add to delays
 - ☐ Do not use high-pressure tactics as they will be counter-productive
- Middle Eastern culture places more value on someone's word than on written agreement:
 - ☐ A person's word is connected to their honor
- One cannot talk about the Middle East in a cultural sense without mentioning Islam.
 - ☐ Islam permeates all levels of society – be familiar with the religion
- Never talk politics: if topic is opened, talk about local attractions / leave this for later

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Business Etiquette:

- Greetings: The traditional Islamic greeting you will hear
 - ❑ SALAM WA ALAY-KUM: **Peace be with you**
- Addressing People: Always Mr./Mrs. Followed by First Name (Mr. Tarek)
 - ❑ Use of a Kunya: expression that conveys esteem or respect / father of: “Abu Tarek”
- Hand shake: Firm right hand (don't shake with left hand / offensive). Always make eye contact.
- If you are introduced to a woman:
 - ❑ It is advisable to wait and see if a hand is extended. If it is not, then do not try to shake hands.
- Meetings: Never show the soles of your feet.
- Business cards: Hand over with text facing the person receiving it.
 - ❑ It is expected that your business card will be in English in one side and Arabic on the other if you live and work there (expat).
- Clothing: Be conservative when it comes to clothing, be modest. Suit & Tie
 - ❑ Women: suit and head scarf

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Meetings:

1. Focus on the Individual Contact:

- Initial meetings are all about relationship building.
 - ☐ Building trust and establishing compatibility are key requisites for doing business
 - ☐ Engage in conversation and get to know the person you are doing business with
- Socialize and discuss topics unrelated to the business at hand.
 - ☐ Talk about historical sites, local attractions, social events.
- After you meet a client don't expect to get straight into the boardroom and clinch a deal
- Build long-term relationships and not just the bottom line; genuine relationships are essential to doing business there.
- Bargaining is an essential characteristic of Arab business culture.
- Negotiating may be a long, slow process lasting many hours or days.
- Never look at your watch. Let client set agenda, first meetings should be open-ended.
- Meetings are circular in nature.
 - ☐ They do not follow a linear pattern and are not structured upon agendas or targets

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Maintenance:

- The most important aspect of customer service for an Arab is personal attention.
- Show Gratitude:
 - ☐ Once a relationship is established email and call client periodically.
 - ☐ Ask about family members.
 - ☐ Non business-related calls for events such as Ramadan and Islamic feasts etc.



SHOOKRON / THANK YOU

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